

The President's Daily Brief

14 March 1969

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LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF

14 MARCH 1969



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15 March 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

VIETNAM

During last night and early today in Vietnam enemy-initiated activity picked up markedly in the II and IV Corps areas, and there was also a relatively high level of action in the III Corps provinces surrounding Saigon. Mortars and rockets hit about 70 allied bases and towns, including four 122-mm. rockets fired into Hue; only light damage was inflicted there and no casualties were reported. This upsurge in enemy activity may represent another phase of his over-all timetable, as a document captured on 14 March called for another "highpoint" to begin at midnight 14 March (11:00 AM yesterday EST). [REDACTED]

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MIDDLE EAST

For the second straight day, the Suez Canal area remains quiet as of 0700 EST, but sporadic firing continues across the Jordan River. (Press)

EUROPE

Both Chancellor Kiesinger and President De Gaulle attempted to put a good light on their two-day meeting which ended yesterday, and indeed our embassy in Paris thinks the talks may have cleared some of the "bad air" from French-German relations. As expected, they covered a wide range of topics but reached few agreements except the need to study closely such problems as extension of the Common Market. On WEU, De Gaulle confirmed the French boycott of the council and said WEU was a matter of no interest to France. On the Soames affair, he said the British version

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was the "opposite" of what he told Soames. The General also indicated that France does not intend to withdraw from the Atlantic Alliance and has no objection to the stationing of US troops in West Germany.

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SOVIET AFFAIRS

There is nothing of significance to report.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

SOVIET UNION - COMMUNIST CHINA

TASS claims that mass demonstrations continued outside the Soviet Embassy in Peking today with loudspeakers blaring anti-Soviet propaganda into the mission compound.

(Press)

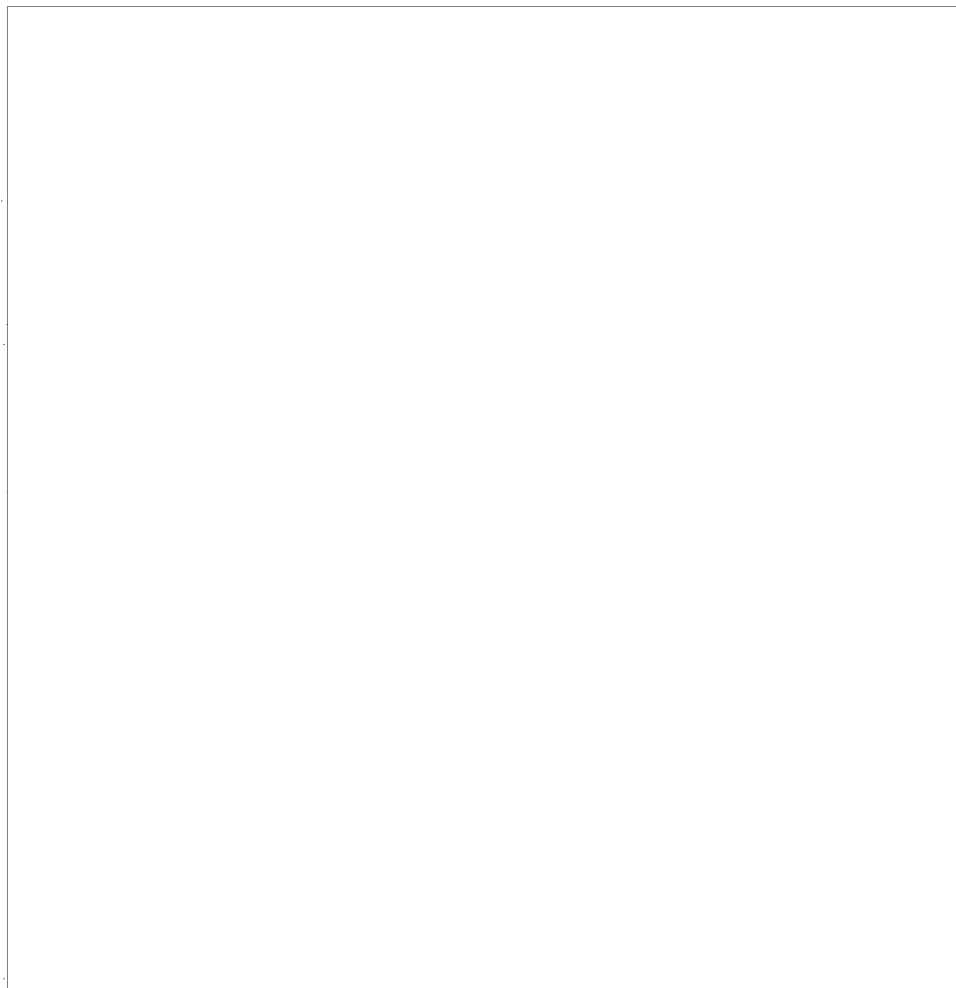
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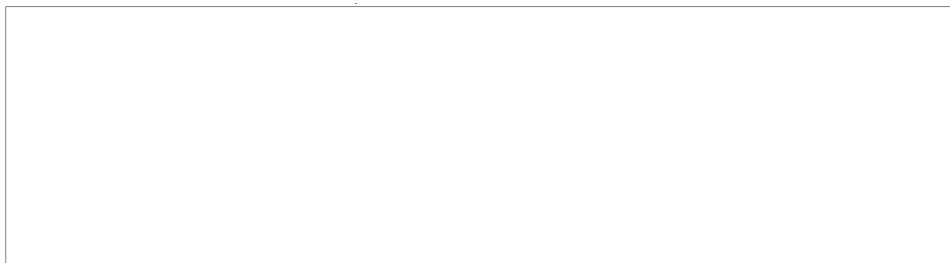
I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

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VIETNAM



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The level of fighting declined even further throughout much of the country on 14 March. There are no reports of new terrorist incidents in either Saigon, Hue, or Da Nang. The Communists launched another sharp ground attack just south of the Demilitarized Zone, however, killing 10 US Marines and wounding 40 at a cost of 23 enemy dead. South Vietnamese units are also reported to be in contact with a large enemy unit northeast of Saigon near Xuan Loc, but complete casualties figures are not yet available.

* * *

We are unable to confirm a French press report that the USSR claims Peking has closed its borders to all Soviet rail shipments for North Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] at least 260 tons of Soviet explosives, most of which are probably destined for North Vietnam military consignees, are currently moving on the Chinese rail system. [REDACTED]

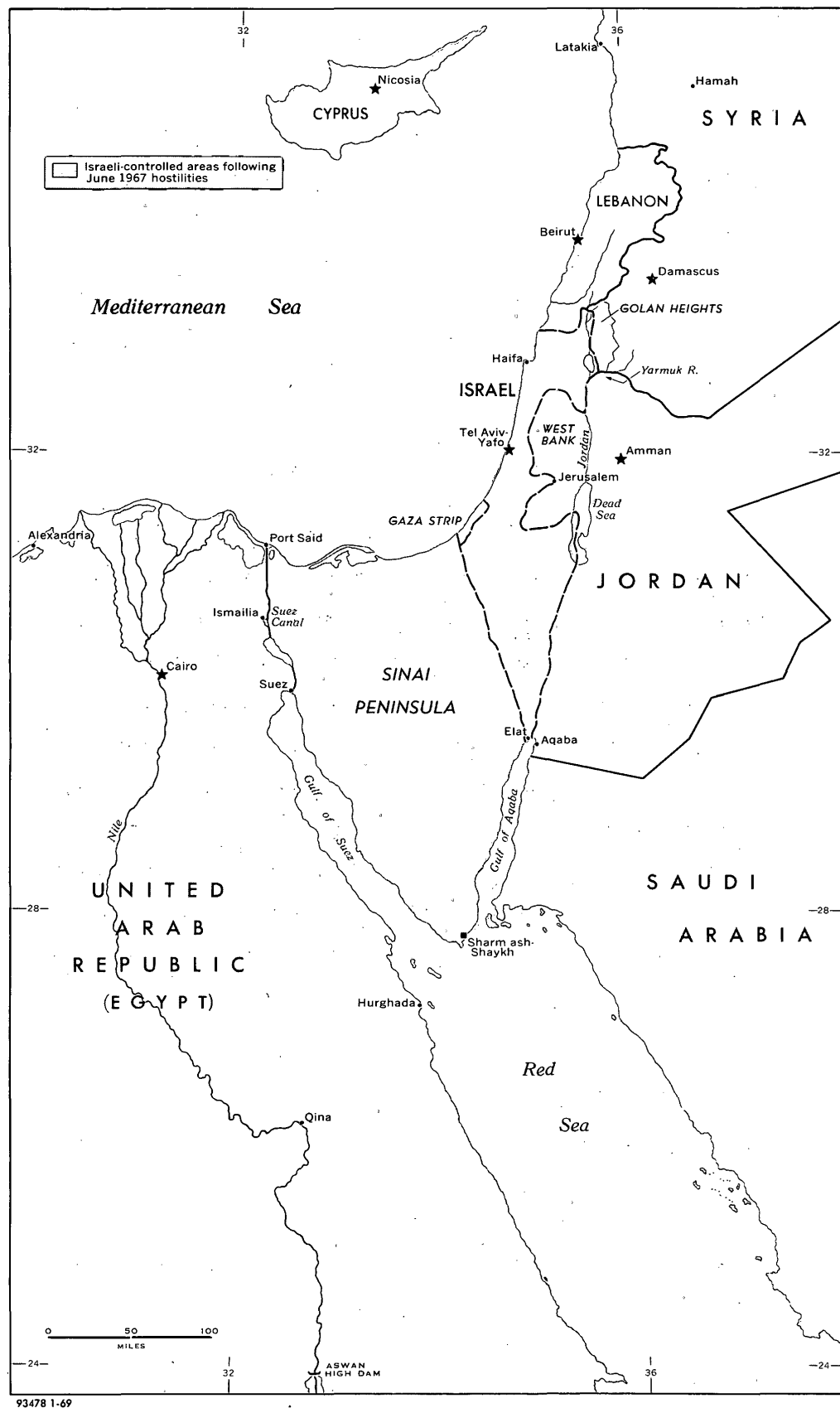
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Rail transit through China is used to deliver all Soviet military equipment to Vietnam, but most of the nearly one million tons of ordinary supplies going to North Vietnam from the USSR each year move by sea. Some industrial

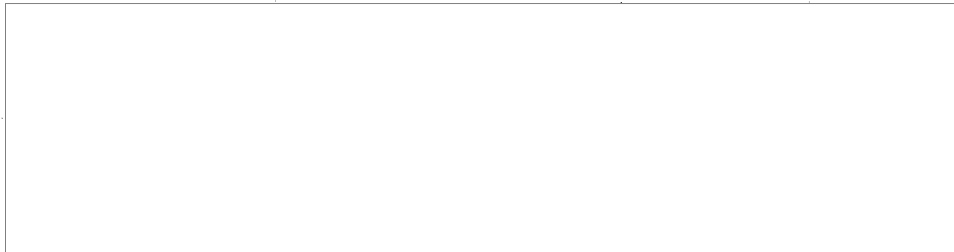
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equipment and vehicles, however, have also been delivered by rail.



MIDDLE EAST

The Suez Canal was quiet today, but UN observers reported yesterday that the Israelis were "beefing up" their forces in the canal area. We suspect Tel Aviv is getting ready for extensive retaliation if the Egyptians start shooting again. The most likely targets would be Egyptian artillery emplacements on the canal. We think Tel Aviv would go after them with aircraft on the theory that a cross-canal operation on the ground would be too costly, but the Israelis may be thinking of combining an air strike against the guns with a helicopter-commando raid against some strategic target deep inside Egypt.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

There will be a major Warsaw Pact meeting next Monday and Tuesday in Budapest. The roster of the Soviet delegation includes Brezhnev, Premier Kosygin, Foreign Minister Gromyko, and Defense Minister Grechko. The Warsaw Pact Commander, Marshal Yakubovsky and the Chief of Staff of the Joint Armed Forces are also traveling to Budapest. It is expected that the other Pact members, including Rumania, will send delegations of similar rank. The participants

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are expected to discuss European security and the "high command" of the Pact. Other likely topics include Pact maneuvers and transit of Pact forces through the territories of member countries.

Also on Monday, representatives of at least sixty Communist parties are scheduled to meet in Moscow to draw up final plans for the "World Communist Conference" which the Soviets hope to stage in May.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

There are signs the 50X1

North Koreans are preparing to step up incidents along the Demilitarized Zone--undoubtedly in response to the current US - South Korean military exercises. Pyongyang's main purpose in instigating incidents probably is to reinforce its propaganda claim that the exercises are a serious threat to peace.

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